



Green Mountain Book Award

Handbook

2007-2008

**Compiled by
the Green Mountain Book Award Committee**



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INTRODUCTION

What is the Green Mountain Book Award?

The Green Mountain Book Award is the student-selected award for Vermonters in grades 9-12. In 2005 it joined the other two Vermont child-selected book awards, The Red Clover Award, a picture book award for children in Kindergarten-grade 4, and the Dorothy Canfield Fisher Award, a book award for students in grades 4-8.

How did the award start?

Librarians have been talking about the possibility of such an award for several years, but it was Marsha Middleton, the librarian at North Country Union High School in Newport, Vermont and Sybil McShane, the Vermont State Librarian, who made it a reality. Marsha had both the desire to start a young adult award and the knowledge of high school kids and their reading, and Sybil had strong interest in having the Department of Libraries better serve the teenagers of Vermont. Both librarians are passionate about young adult literature and bringing the best to kids, so it was a natural partnership.

The Department of Libraries agreed to fund a pilot project, and a group of excited volunteers formed a committee in 2004. The Vermont Educational Media Association contributed funding, and CAYAL, the Children's and Young Adult section of the Vermont Library Association, pledged support and recruited volunteers. The first committee set ground rules, established criteria and selected the first masterlist. Since then we have written bylaws, conducted a logo contest and had materials created. This year's committee consisted of: Ellen Arapakos, Librarian, Champlain Valley Union High School; Annie Brabazon, Director, South Hero Community Library; Mary Neville Hood, Retired School Librarian; Kathy Johnson, freelance writer and editor, Cambridge; Dollinda Lund, Librarian, Lyndon Institute; Hannah Peacock, Youth Services Librarian, Burnham Memorial Library, Colchester; Beth Wright, Youth Services Librarian, Fletcher Free Library, Burlington; Marsha Middleton, Librarian, North Country Union High School, Chair; Grace Greene, Children's Services Consultant, Department of Libraries, Liaison to Committee, and Philip Charles Crawford, Library Director, Essex High School, Administrative Assistant.

Mission statement

The goal of the award is to select a list of books of good literary quality that:

- Engages high school students.
- Represents a variety of genres, formats and viewpoints.
- May include books written both for young people and adults.
- Reflects the interests of high school students.

Criteria for choosing books

To be eligible for the Green Mountain Book Award list, a book must:

- Be available in paperback
- Have been published in the last 5 years (2002-2006 for the 2007-2008 list)
- Have received two favorable reviews in professionally recognized review sources (if possible)

In addition, there may be only one book by an author on any given list.

Timetable

To coincide with the calendars of the Dorothy Canfield Fisher Award and the Red Clover Award, voting for the winner of the Green Mountain Book Award is held in April. The committee recommends that in order to be eligible to vote, a student should read at least three books on the masterlist. The new list is available in March, and will be sent out to all school and public libraries at that time.

Book Sets

The Department of Libraries has multiple copies of each book on the masterlist, and will house them at the two regional libraries: Midstate in Berlin and Northeast in St. Johnsbury.

Materials available

There are new bookmarks that list the nominees for the 2007-2008 award. If you would like some, please call or email Grace Greene at the Department of Libraries: 828-6954; email: grace.greene@mail.dol.state.vt.us

Website

There is not a separate website for the Green Mountain Book Award, but materials are on the Department of Libraries website:

<http://www.libraries.vermont.gov/www5/LIBRARIES/gmba/gmba.htm>

Logo

This past year there was a logo contest open to all high school students in Vermont. The winner of the contest is a student at Leland and Gray High School in Townshend, Soo-mi Park. Soo-mi is an exchange student from South Korea, and was absolutely thrilled about winning the contest. We will be using her logo to create new bookmarks and eventually posters and other materials. Her prize was \$100 gift certificate to a bookstore. Winners of second and third places are both sophomores from Lamoille Union High School: Amanda Moreau won second place and Phillip Rosenblum won third prize. They, too, received gift certificates to a bookstore.

Green Mountain Book Award Master List 2007-2008

Akbar, Said Hyder. *Come Back to Afghanistan*. Bloomsbury, 2006.

\$14.95 ISBN 9781596910683 (pap.); Bloomsbury, 2005. \$24.95. ISBN 978-1582345208.

The author describes his experience as an American teenager when he traveled to Afghanistan to see his father, who was the spokesman for President Hamid Karzai and then became the governor of Kunar.

Almond, Steve. *Candyfreak: A Journey Through the Chocolate Underbelly of America*.

Harcourt, 2005. \$13.00. ISBN 978-0156032933 (pap.); Algonquin Books, 2004. \$21.95. ISBN 978-1565124219.

Almond follows his delicious obsession across America, chewing on such weighty matters as product placement, mega-corporations, and the dilemma posed by chocolate-covered coconut as he dips into the stories behind a handful of regional specialties, including Vermont's own Lake Champlain Chocolates. A hip and sometimes flip voice enrobes a sometimes dark and rocky road story.

Dessen, Sarah. *The Truth About Forever*. Puffin, 2006. \$7.99. ISBN 978-0142406250 (pap.); Viking, 2004. \$16.99. ISBN 978-0670036394.

The summer following her father's death, Macy plans to work as the library and wait for her brainy boyfriend to return from camp, but instead she goes to work at a catering business where she makes new friends and finally faces her grief.

Foer, Jonathan Safran. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. Mariner Books, 2006. \$13.95. ISBN 978-0618711659 (pap.); Houghton, 2005. \$24.95. ISBN 978-0618329700.

Oskar Schell, the nine-year-old son of a man killed in the World Trade Center attacks, searches the five boroughs of New York City for a lock that fits a black key his father left behind.

Gaiman, Neil. *Anansi Boys*. Harper Torch, 2006. \$7.99. ISBN 978-0060515195 (pap.); Morrow, 2005. \$26.95. ISBN 978-0060515188.

A semi-realistic fantasy that blends African myth and contemporary Afro-American/Afro-British culture in a story about an accountant who loses the father who caused him terminal embarrassment, gains a brother he never knew he had, and finds true love.

Green, John. *Looking for Alaska*. Puffin, 2006. \$7.99 ISBN 978-0142402511 (pap.); Dutton, 2005. \$15.99. ISBN 978-0525475064.

Sixteen-year-old Miles' first year at Culver Creek Preparatory School in Alabama includes good friends and great pranks.

Oppel, Kenneth. *Airborn*. HarperCollins/Eos, 2005. \$7.99 ISBN 978-0060531829 (pap.); Eos, 2004. \$16.99. ISBN. 978-0060531805.

Matt, a young cabin boy aboard an airship, and Kate, a wealthy young girl traveling with her chaperone, team up to search for the existence of mysterious winged

creatures reportedly living hundreds of feet above the Earth's surface.

Otsuka, Julie. *When the Emperor Was Divine*. Anchor, 2003. \$10.95. ISBN 978-0385721813 (pap.).

A story told from five different points of view chronicles the experiences of Japanese Americans caught up in the nightmare of World War II internment camps.

Rosoff, Meg. *How I Live Now*. Random/Wendy Lamb, 2006. \$7.99. ISBN 978-0553376050 (pap.); Random/Wendy Lamb, 2004. \$16.95. ISBN 978-0385746779.

To get away from her pregnant stepmother in New York City, fifteen-year-old Daisy goes to England to stay with her aunt and cousins, with whom she instantly bonds, but soon war breaks out and rips apart the family while devastating the land.

Simmons, Michael. *Finding Lubchenko*. Penguin/Razorbill, 2006. \$8.99. ISBN 978-1595140753 (pap.); Razorbill, 2005. \$16.99. ISBN 978-1595140210.

When his father is framed for murder and bioterrorism, high-school junior Evan, using clues from a stolen laptop, travels from Seattle to Paris with two friends to find the real culprit.

Vaughan, Brian. *Runaways Vol. 1: Pride & Joy*. Marvel Comics, 2004. \$7.99. ISBN 978-078511379 (pap).

When six young friends discover that their parents are all secretly super-powered villains, they run away together and find strength in one another to overcome their evil legacy.

Walls, Jeannette. *The Glass Castle*. Scribner, 2006. \$14.00. ISBN 978-0743247542 (pap.); Scribner, 2005. \$25.00. ISBN 978-0743247535.

The child of an alcoholic father and an eccentric artist mother discusses her family's nomadic upbringing, during which she and her siblings fended for themselves while their parents outmaneuvered bill collectors and the authorities.

Whitcomb, Laura. *A Certain Slant of Light*. Graphia, 2005. \$8.99. ISBN 978-0618585328 (pap.).

After benignly haunting a series of people for 130 years, Helen meets a teenage boy who can see her, and together they unlock the mysteries of their pasts.

Yang, Gene Luen. *American Born Chinese*. First Second, 2006. \$16.95. ISBN 978-1596431522 (pap); First Second, 2006. \$29.95. ISBN 978-1596432086 (collector's edition).

This graphic novel alternates three interrelated stories about the problems of young Chinese Americans trying to participate in the popular culture.

Zusak, Markus. *I am the Messenger*. Knopf, 2006. \$8.95. ISBN 978-0375836671 (pap); Knopf, 2005. \$16.95. ISBN 978-0375830990 (tr.) ISBN 0-375-83099-5; \$18.95. ISBN 978-0375930997 (PLB).

After capturing a bank robber, nineteen-year-old cabdriver Ed Kennedy begins receiving mysterious messages that direct him to addresses where people need help, and he begins getting over his lifelong feeling of worthlessness.

How to Apply for the Committee

The Green Mountain Book Award Committee consists of 10 volunteers and the Children's Services Consultant from the Vermont Department of Libraries. There is currently one three-year opening on the committee, so we are recruiting for that position. We are looking for people who work with high school students and are passionate about books. School librarians, public librarians, teachers and community members are all urged to apply. The chosen candidate will begin work immediately on the next list (2008-2009).

If you are interested in applying, please send a letter of interest, a resume and two reviews, one positive and one negative of any books of your choice to:

Grace Greene
Children's Services Consultant
Vermont Dept. of Libraries
109 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05609
grace.greene@mail.dol.state.vt.us

Deadline is June 1, 2007. Decisions will be made at a June meeting.

Guidelines for writing reviews

1. Book reviews should be between 200 and 1,000 words in length.
2. Each review should include a brief descriptive summary and an assessment of appeal to high school students.
3. Reviews should touch on the quality of the following features:

For Nonfiction:

- Authority and responsibility of the author
- Organization
- Writing style
- Illustrations
- Design
- Documentation of sources

For Poetry:

- Sound (rhyme, meter)
- Imagery
- Ideas

For Fiction:

- Plot
- Integration of background material
- Pacing
- Mood
- Characterization
- Point of view
- Setting
- Writing style
- Theme

Book Suggestion for the Green Mountain Book Award

Snail mail or email by October 5, 2007 to:

Grace Greene
Children's Services Consultant
Vermont Department of Libraries
109 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05609
grace.greene@mail.dol.state.vt.us

Name _____ Grade (if a student) _____

School or library _____

Title of Book _____

Author _____

Publisher and date of publication _____

*To be eligible for consideration by the Green Mountain Book Award Committee for the 2008-2009 masterlist, the book must have been first published in 2003-2007, and must be of interest to students in grades 9-12. Both adult and young adult books are eligible, and the authors can be of any nationality. The only other stipulation is that the book **MUST** currently be available in paperback in the US.*

Do not include plot summaries, but please tell the committee why you think this book belongs on the GMBA list. Use as much space as you need.

This book should be on the list because:

COME BACK TO AFGHANISTAN: A CALIFORNIA TEENAGER'S STORY

by Said Hyder Akbar with Susan Burton

Genre: Memoir

Themes: Post 9/11 life in Afghanistan, family, the Taliban, tribes, government and travel.

Author information: Said Hyder Akbar was a high school student when he decided to follow his father to his homeland of Afghanistan in 2003. He is currently a student at Yale University. Akbar has started his own company to rebuild schools and pipelines in a rural province in Afghanistan.

Susan Burton is a writer and contributing editor to the NPR radio program *This American Life*.

Plot Summary: A chronicle of Akbar's experiences and reactions of three summers in Afghanistan observing and helping his father set up a provincial government.

Booktalk: After 9/11, Said's father was asked to come back to Afghanistan by Hamid Karzai to help rebuild the war-torn country. Said, a high school student at the time, followed his father. Armed with a tape recorder (used for the radio documentaries for *This American Life*) he captured everything he saw and heard, from life on the streets to secret meetings. The result is a heart-warming look at a country most know very little about. We come to care deeply for the people we are introduced to and the future of their beautiful mountainous country.

Curriculum tie-ins:

History

- Research the history of Afghanistan.
- Discuss how landscape affects government.
- Discuss the interference of other countries in a country's rebuilding effort.
- Discuss what democracy and freedom mean to you.
- Research and discuss Islam and sects.

English

- Read a novel set in Afghanistan and compare it to this memoir.
- Pick one memorable time in your life and write about it.
- Turn this piece of writing into a story or a poem.

If you loved this, you'll like:

Barakat, Ibtisam. *Tasting the Sky: A Palestinian Childhood*. FSG, 2007.
Ellis, Deborah. *The Breadwinner*. Groundwood Books, 2001.
Hosseini, Kahlid. *The Kite Runner*. Penguin Group, 2004.
Stewart, Rory. *Places in Between*. Harcourt, 2006.

Additional resources:

“This American Life” (2003). www.thislife.org/Radio_Episode.aspx?episode=230
www.thislife.org/Radio_Episode.aspx?episode=254

Johnson, Chris. *Afghanistan: The Background, the Issues, the People*. Oxfam Publishing, 2004.
Jones, Ann. *Kabul in Winter: Life Without Peace in Afghanistan*. Picador, 2007.
Klaits, Alexander. *Love and War in Afghanistan*. Seven Stories Press, 2006.
Tanner, Stephen. *Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the Fall of the Taliban*. Perseus Publishing, 2003.

CANDYFREAK: A JOURNEY THROUGH THE CHOCOLATE UNDERBELLY OF AMERICA

by Steve Almond

Genre: creative nonfiction

Themes: obsessions, chocolate, candy industry, capitalism, marketing, globalism/ regionalism

Author information: Steve Almond was raised in Palo Alto, California. He worked as a newspaper reporter for seven years, in El Paso and Miami, before he began writing fiction. He taught creative writing part-time at Boston College, until he resigned (via an op-ed piece in the *Boston Globe*), in protest of the college's decision to invite Condeleeza Rice as commencement speaker in 2006.

Fun fact: He detests coconut, especially in candy bars.

Plot summary: An investigation of regional candy companies from coast to coast, beginning with Necco in Boston, near where he now lives, and finishing with the Annabelle Candy Company in his hometown of San Francisco. One of his first stops is Lake Champlain Chocolates, in Burlington, VT. Along the way he shares information about the production process and the challenges facing small candy companies in an age dominated by a few mega-corporations.

Booktalk: You think you like candy? You think you crave chocolate? Not like Steve Almond. This is a man who tells you, right up front, "The author has eaten a piece of candy every single day of his entire life." This is a man who admits to laying in his pile of Halloween candy like a dragon in his hoard. This is a man who schedules a four-day trip covering 4,000 miles, all in order to visit candy factories in such hubs of culture as Merriam, Kansas, or Boise, Idaho. That's right, Steve Almond is obsessed. He's also witty and entertaining and an astute observer whose chosen subject can be used as a metaphor for larger social issues. After reading this book, you'll never look at the checkout candy display in the same way again. But you'll also savor that chocolate bar—even if it does include coconut—in a whole new way.

Curriculum tie-ins:

English/Creative writing

What are you obsessed with? Why do you think you're obsessed? Find out some facts about the object of your obsession and write a personal essay integrating your research with your feelings, attitudes, and personal history.

Economics

What are some of the economic issues facing the small regional candy makers Almond visits?

Write a paper discussing the various strategies the candy makers have chosen in order to stay in business. What are the strengths of these strategies? What are their weaknesses?

Using the candy industry as your focus, discuss the possibility of sustaining a local/regional business in an era of globalization.

Can you think of other types of small businesses that face similar challenges to regional candy makers?

Family and Consumer Science

Using a local store, research product placement. What is at eye level on the shelves? What is placed near or on the checkout counters? Why do you suppose it is there? If possible, interview the owner/manager and ask about “slotting fees” and how he or she decides where to put certain types of products.

If you loved this, you’ll like:

Brenner, Joel Glenn. *The Emperors of Chocolate: Inside the Secret World of Hershey and Mars*. Joel. Broadway, 2000.

Brookes, Tim. *Guitar: An American Life*. Grove, 2005.

Brookes, Tim. *A Hell of a Place to Lose a Cow: An American Hitchhiking Odyssey*. Adventure/National Geographic, 2000.

O’Rourke, P.J. *On the Wealth of Nations*. Atlantic Monthly Press, 2007

Rosenblum, Mort. *Chocolate: A Bittersweet Saga of Light and Dark*. North Point, 2004.

Stewart, Jon. *America (The Book): A Citizen’s Guide to Democracy Inaction*. Warner, 2004.

Other books by this author:

Which Brings Me to You: A Novel in Confessions, co-written with Julianna Baggott. Algonquin Books, 2006.

The Evil B.B. Chow and Other Stories. Algonquin Books, 2005. (story collection)

My Life in Heavy Metal. Grove Press, 2002. (story collection)

Additional resources:

www.stevenalmond.com – Steve Almond’s official website.

www.class.uidaho.edu/druker/nonfic.html – Definition of “creative non-fiction.”

THE TRUTH ABOUT FOREVER

by Sarah Dessen

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Themes: Loss of a parent, grief, finding one's way, finding one's voice, friendship, mother/daughter relationships, fear, love.

Author information: Sarah Dessen was born in 1970 in Illinois, but has spent most of her life in Chapel Hill, NC. Her parents were both professors at the University of North Carolina: her mother is a classicist and her father teaches Shakespeare.

She lives in the country with her husband, some lizards and two spoiled dogs. She is expecting her first child in 2007. She loves Starbucks mochas and makes a mean bean salad. She is currently working on her eighth book, *Lock and Key*, which is scheduled to be published in 2008.

Plot Summary: Macy Queen's life is structured and controlled. As summer begins, her perfect boyfriend Jason is heading off to Brain Camp. Her time is supposed to be spent staying on top of her studies, taking over Jason's horrible job at the library and helping her mother in any way she can, and that includes NEVER talking about her father's death. Macy's mother hires Wish Catering for a work function at home. They are disorganized, hilarious and need Macy's help. She slowly winds her way into their lives, and they into hers. With these new and unexpected friendships, Macy begins to remove the layers of protective coating she has held on to so tightly since she witnessed her father dying.

Booktalk: "I nodded. 'I'm fine. Fine.' That was my mantra. The thing I kept saying in my mind." Macy Queen is the perfect sixteen-year old. She does well at school, studies all the time, has the dream boyfriend, never talks back and now works at the library. Macy has taken over her boyfriend's library job while he is away at camp; she works with two girls who despise her as they think Jason is dating beneath himself. They are rude to her, they ridicule her and they don't let her help any patrons, as they have no faith in her abilities. But, Macy never speaks up to defend herself, as she has been trained to keep everything inside. She is just fine. Actually, she is broken inside; she holds it all together because she always has and knows she is supposed to be strong for her mother. Macy is quietly shattered by her father's death. Not only has she lost her favorite person, but she witnessed his death and feels responsible for it. Her sister Caroline has become increasingly frustrated and saddened by both Macy and their mother's inability to talk about this terrible and tragic event. Then along comes the crew from Wish Catering and Macy's world is turned upside-down. Two of her new friends, Wes and Kristy, help Macy step out of her comfort zone and to realize that something has to shift, as she will not be able to continue at this pace. She needs to be able to talk about what happened, with friends, with her boyfriend and most of all, with her mother. Wes is a tattooed, talented artist who had a stint in reform school and is the exact opposite of boyfriend Jason, the all-state math champ with the highest GPA in the history of the school. Jason is off at Brain Camp though, and it is Wes who gets Macy talking and soon she is rethinking how she wants to live her life.

Curriculum tie-ins:

Creative Writing

“For any one of us our forever could end in an hour, or a hundred years from now. You can never know for sure, so you’d better make every second count... If your forever was ending tomorrow, was this how you’d want to have spent it??”

In this quote from Chapter 7 of *The Truth About Forever*, Kristy is trying to explain to Macy that she needs to break out of the rut she’s in.

Write a story about living life to the fullest, being sure to think about your own life and whether you are really living it the way you want to.

Social Studies

Dealing with the death of a loved one- some questions for discussion:

- How does our society handle death?
- Do we face death head-on?
- Do we avoid the people who need our help the most?
- What would you do if a good friend lost a parent?
- Does your school have good resources for students who face the tragedy of losing someone they love?

Business

Delia’s catering business seems disorganized and chaotic, although it apparently works for her and her staff.

Write a plan for starting your own small business, including requirements for budget, inventory, space needed, etc.

If you loved this, you’ll like:

Blume, Judy. *Tiger Eyes*. Simon & Schuster, 1981.

Green, John. *Looking for Alaska*. Speak, 2007. (also on this year’s GMBA list)

Haddix, Margaret Peterson. *Takeoffs and Landings*. Aladdin, 2003.

Peters, Julie Anne. *Far from Xanadu*. Little Brown, 2005

Sones, Sonya. *One of Those Hideous Books Where the Mother Dies*. Simon & Schuster, 2004.

Other books by this author:

Just Listen. Viking Books, 2006.

That Summer. Speak, 2004.

This Lullaby. Viking Books, 2002.

Dreamland. Viking Books, 2000.

Keeping the Moon. Viking Books, 1999.

Someone Like You. Viking Books, 1998.

Additional resources:

The Truth about Forever is available in an unabridged audio format (CD and cassette) from Recorded Books.

Resources for teens dealing with the loss of a parent:

Fitzgerald, Helen. *The Grieving Teen: A Guide for Teenagers and their Friends*. Fireside, 2000.

Hughes, Lynne. *You Are Not Alone: Teens Talk About Life after the Loss of a Parent*. Scholastic, 2005.

http://www.kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/emotions/someone_died.html

<http://www.thehealingplaceinfo.org/>

Website of author

<http://www.sarahdessen.com/>

EXTREMELY LOUD & INCREDIBLY CLOSE

by Jonathan Safran Foer

Genre: Realistic fiction, Contemporary historical fiction

Themes: A child coping with loss, absence and grief, family flashbacks to the Holocaust, resilience of the human spirit - all set against the horror of September 11, 2001 in New York City.

Author information: Jonathan Safran Foer was born in 1977 and grew up in Washington D.C. He attended Princeton, where he studied philosophy. According to his thesis advisor, Joyce Carol Oates, Safran Foer is a natural surrealist. His bestselling debut novel, *Everything is Illuminated* (published when he was just 25) won numerous awards. Safran Foer says, "A book is a little sculpture. The choice of fonts, the size of the margins, the typography all influence the way the book is read. I consciously wanted to think about that, wanted to have the book really be something you hold in your hands, not just a vehicle for words. So I was involved in every step of the design of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*." Safran Foer and his wife, writer Nicole Krauss, and their young son live in Brooklyn, New York.

Plot Summary: Oskar Schell is an inventor, Francophile, tambourine player, Shakespearean actor, jeweler, pacifist. He is nine years old. And he is on an urgent, secret search through the five boroughs of New York to find the lock that fits a mysterious key belonging to his father, who died in the attacks on the World Trade Center. This quest intertwines with the story of his grandparents whose lives were blighted by the firebombing of Dresden during World War II.

Booktalk: Oskar Schell is the endearing, exasperating, and hilarious nine-year-old narrator of this novel. But Oskar's boots, as he likes to say, are very heavy - his father, whom he worshipped, perished in the World Trade Center. He careens from Central Park West to Coney Island to Harlem, without his mother's knowledge, on his search for the lock that will fit the key that he finds a year after his father died. The key's container is labeled "Black" and, with flawless kid logic, Oskar decides to find everyone in New York City with the last name of Black. Along the way he is always dreaming up inventions to keep those he loves safe from harm. What about a birdseed shirt to let you fly far away? "I could invent a teakettle that reads in Dad's voice, so I could fall asleep." His goal is hopeful, but his grandparents' stories from the Holocaust speak a loud warning of those who've lost loved ones before. Finally, Oskar imagines a "special drain that would be underneath every pillow in New York," collecting the tears of people who cry themselves to sleep and funneling them into the Central Park reservoir.

Curriculum tie-ins:

Teacher's guide

The American Place Theatre: Literature to Life. *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer, Teacher's Resource Guide. View site below for more discussion questions and activities.

http://www.americanplacetheatre.org/stage/files/resourceguides/RG_ELIC_0905.pdf

Literature

Discuss the meaning of the title *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*.

- Is it a descriptive title? If so, what do you think it is describing- a person, an emotion, an idea?
- Do “extremely” and “incredibly” mean the same thing? How do they differ?
- Have the students revise the title of the book to make it about them. Keep the words “extremely” and “incredibly” but add in adjectives that describes themselves – (i.e. if this book were about me, it would be titled *Extremely Smart and Incredibly Tall*)

Discuss after reading the following dialogue (pages 170 – 171 paperback edition).

O. “I miss Dad.”

M. “So do I.”..... to end of page 171 “I would have chosen you!”

Discuss:

- How does Oscar deal with his sadness?
- How does his mother deal with her sadness?
- Can people have different ways of grieving?
- What does the last quote from Oskar mean? Why did he say this?

Resource Guide

Santa Monica Reads Resource Guide. *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer. View the guide below for questions and novel background.

<http://www.smpl.org/cwr/loudandclose.pdf>

Art & Graphics

Discuss the graphic elements in *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*. Do they add or detract from the story? Why or why not?

What is your reaction to the final series of photographs at the book's conclusion?

Drama

This title has been optioned for a film. What aspects of the novel lend themselves to cinematic treatment?

If you loved this, you'll like:

Haddon, Mark. *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. Doubleday, 2003.

Maynard, Joyce. *The Usual Rules*. St. Martin's Press, 2003.

Portraits of Grief from the New York Times. Time Books, 2002.

Spiegelman, Art. *In the Shadow of the Towers*. Viking, 2004.

Another book by this author:

Foer, Jonathan Safran. *Everything is Illuminated*. Houghton Mifflin, 2002.

Additional Resources:

Available: (besides hardcover and paperback)

Audio Cassette: Recorded Books (August 2005) ISBN-10: 1402537840

Audio CD: Recorded Books (April 2005) ISBN-10: 1419328794

Audio Download: <http://www.audible.com>

About the author:

New York Times. The Rescue Artist by Deborah Solomon Feb. 27, 2005

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/27/magazine/27FOER.html?ei=5090&en=adbd05d8d5964ba3&ex=1267246800&partner=rssuserland&pagewanted=all&position=>

The Loft Literary Center: Jonathan Safran Foer

Talking Volumes Book Club Guides courtesy of the Edelstein-Keller endowment in the Creative Writing Program at the University of Minnesota.

http://www.loft.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=feature.display&feature_ID=385New York

About September 11th:

The September 11 Digital Archive. "The September 11 Digital Archive uses electronic media to collect, preserve, and present the history of the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York, Virginia, and Pennsylvania and the public responses to them."

www.911digitalarchive.org/

Website of author:

<http://www.jonathansafranfoer.com/>

ANANSI BOYS by Neil Gaiman

Genre: reality-based fantasy

Themes: sibling relationships, father-son relationships, falling in love, African mythology, the search for self, masculinity

Author information: Neil Gaiman was born November 10, 1960 in Porchester, Hampshire and grew up in Sussex, both counties on the south coast of England. His father owned a vitamin company and his mother was a pharmacist; he was the oldest of three children and the only boy. Although his family is Jewish in origin, he was educated in Church of England schools. He told a CNN interviewer that he read C.S. Lewis' Narnia books at about age seven. In his teens he discovered Samuel R. Delany, Harlan Ellison, and Roger Zelazny. His first paid publication was a review of a rock concert; his first novel was *Ghastly Beyond Belief*; and another early work was *Don't Panic: The Official "Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy" Companion* (1988).

A friendship with Alan Moore, famed comic book creator, led to Gaiman's first work in that genre. His *Sandman* series, which ran for 75 monthly episodes from the late 1980s until 1996, broke new thematic ground and the *Sandman* collections remain popular. He received a World Fantasy award for the *Sandman* in 1991; Hugo, Nebula, and Bram Stoker awards for *American Gods*; and Mythopoeic Fantasy, Locus, and Alex Awards for *Anansi Boys*.

Fun Fact: Gaiman is friends with Tori Amos, who frequently works references to him into her songs.

Plot summary: An exploration of African myths in a contemporary setting that reflects the extent of the African Diaspora (Britain, the U.S., the Caribbean) and the spread of the Anansi tales, this comic novel plays on universal themes of embarrassing parents, falling in love with the wrong person, and corporate corruption, as Mr. Nancy's (Anansi's) son, Fat Charlie, goes on a journey of discovery.

Booktalk: You think your parents are embarrassing? You ain't seen nothin' like Fat Charlie Nancy's dad. For starters, he's the one who gave him that nickname, and what with Mr. Nancy being a god and all, nicknames given by him have a way of sticking. Theoretically all grown up, Fat Charlie is trying to get on with things—to be a decent accountant, to marry the girl he thinks he loves—when his dad dies. Fat Charlie thinks he's finally going to be free of the old man's influence, but when your father's a trickster god, you can count on the embarrassment to continue even after he's gone.

To add to the complications, a guy who is everything Fat Charlie is not—powerful, confident, a real babe magnet—shows up claiming to be Fat Charlie's brother Spider. Suddenly life grows extremely complicated, yet somehow infinitely more interesting, as the Old Ones and one truly nasty real one conspire until Fat Charlie proves that he is his father's son after all.

A comedy in the Shakespearean fashion, complete with tangled romances, three strange old women, and a satisfying ending in which both the good and the bad receive what they

deserve, *Anansi Boys* is a satisfying mixture of eternal myth and twenty-first century reality, a trans-Atlantic tale that will satisfy readers of fantasy and contemporary fiction alike.

Curriculum tie-ins:

English/Creative writing

Retell a favorite myth, giving it a realistic setting and contemporary characters.

English/Literature

Compare trickster tales from several cultures. What do the tricksters have in common? What are the differences?

Extension: Create your own trickster god and write your own trickster tale.

Compare some of the picture book retellings of the Anansi stories by Eric Kimmel, Verna Aardema, or Gerald McDermott with *Anansi Boys*.

Sociology

Some questions for discussion:

- What is your idea of masculinity?
- What does the way Fat Charlie and Spider are portrayed in *Anansi Boys* have to say about images of black masculinity?
- What are some of the implications of Mrs. Dunwiddy taking “all the tricksiness” out of Fat Charlie?

Map the African Diaspora (where African slaves were taken) and consider what happened to the Anansi stories as they traveled from Africa to the Caribbean and the southern United States, as well as England.

If you loved this, you’ll like:

The Discworld novels, by Terry Pratchett. *The Colour of Magic* (1983) is the first, but several mini-arcs within the series stand alone. *Wee Free Men* (2003) is the first of the tales of Tiffany Aching; *Guards! Guards!* (1989) marks the start of the Night Watch novels.

De Lint, Charles. *Widdershins*. Tor, 2006

Wright, John C. *Orphans of Chaos*. Tor, 2005

Yang, Gene Luen. *American Born Chinese*. First Second/Roaring Brook, 2006. (also on this year’s GMBA list)

Other books by this author:

Fragile Things: Short Fictions and Wonders. William Morrow, 2006.

American Gods. William Morrow, 2001.

The Sandman: Preludes and Nocturnes (vol. 1). Vertigo, 1993.

Good Omens: The Nice and Accurate Prophecies of Agnes Nutter, Witch. Co-written with Terry Pratchett. Workman Publishing, 1990.

Additional resources:

“Neil Gaiman: Adults Deserve Good Fairy Tales, Too.” Article by Jonathan D. Austin, available at www.cnn.com/books/news/9902/25/gaiman.neil/index.html

Hyde, Lewis. *Trickster Makes This World: Mischief, Myth, and Art*. North Point/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998.

Website:

Neil Gaiman’s official website: <http://neilgaiman.com/>

LOOKING FOR ALASKA

by John Green

Genre: Realistic fiction

Themes: Death, Friendship, School

Author information: John Green is a young author who now lives in New York, although he previously lived in Chicago and in fact attended a private boarding school in Alabama. He loves anagrams, and includes many in his most recent novel, *An Abundance of Katherines*. In addition to writing novels, he is a commentator for NPR and writes an interesting blog on his website. He won many awards for *Looking for Alaska*, including the 2006 Michael L. Printz award for young adult literature.

Plot summary: A young man transfers out of public school to attend a private boarding school in Alabama. There, he is accepted by a small group of friends with whom he grows close and pulls elaborate pranks.

Booktalk: Miles Halter takes the bold step of leaving his public high school—where he has so few connections only two people put in a brief appearance at his “going away” party—to attend a private boarding school in Alabama. He hopes to have some adventures and a meaningful school experience, and he is not disappointed. His take-charge, no-nonsense, down-home roommate, “The Colonel,” christens skinny Miles “Pudge” and inducts him into the world of smoking, drinking, and boarding school pranks. Pudge is quickly smitten with fast-talking, quick-thinking Alaska, who is as attractive as she is unavailable. Will Pudge ever get together with Alaska? Just as importantly, why is each chapter entitled with a number of “days before” and “days after?”

Curriculum tie-ins:

Language Arts/Social Studies

Read the author’s epilogue, “Some last words on last words.” Choose one of the historical figures to research, or choose your own from the “Last Words” website listed under **Additional Resources**. Can you find some historically inaccurate last words? Put someone’s last words in context for a classmate—who was this person, and why is s/he historically significant?

What would be the last words of other characters in the book? Why?

The school is divided between the boarding students and the “weekend warriors.” How does socio-economic class divide the school? How is economic disparity related in the book? How does it impact the school culture?

Has a quote, a book, or a biography ever inspired you to make a change in your life?

How does the author’s device of dividing the novel into two sections—*before* and

after function? Consider ideas of anticipation, foreshadowing, time, etc.

If you loved this, you'll like:

Eggers, Dave. *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*. Simon & Schuster, 2000.

Galloway, Gregory. *As Simple as Snow*. Putnam's, 2005.

Irving, John. *A Prayer for Owen Meany*. Ballantine, 2001.

Klass, David. *You Don't Know Me*. Harper Tempest, 2001.

Krovatin, Christopher. *Heavy Metal and You*. PUSH, 2005.

Maynard, Joyce. *The Usual Rules*. St. Martin's Griffin, 2004.

Another book by this author:

An Abundance of Katherines. Dutton, 2006.

Additional Resources:

<http://www.sanftleben.com/Last%20Words/lastwords.html>

<http://www.sparksflyup.com/>

AIRBORN

by Kenneth Oppel

Genre: Fantasy adventure

Themes: Survival, facing challenges head-on, differences between the classes, budding romance, coming of age, friendship, loss of parent, death.

Author information:

Kenneth Oppel was born in 1967 in Port Alberni, British Columbia. He knew at the age of twelve that he wanted to be a writer. He went through many writing phases in his young career, including his Star Wars phase, his Dungeons and Dragons phase and his video game phase. *Colin's Fantastic Video Adventure*, which he wrote when he was 14, was published in 1985, thanks to some help from Roald Dahl, one of Oppel's favorite writers. Through a mutual friend, Dahl saw the manuscript and liked it enough to pass it on to his own literary agent, who subsequently decided that it was worthy of publication.

Oppel completed his BA at the University of Toronto (a double major in cinema studies and English) and wrote his second children's novel *The Live-Forever Machine* in his final year, for a creative writing course. He married the year after graduation and spent the next three years in Oxford, where his wife was doing doctoral studies in Shakespeare.

In addition to his fiction, Oppel, who lives in Toronto with his wife and three kids, has also written several screenplays.

Airborn is a Printz Honor Book, the winner of the 2004 Governor General's Literary Award for Children's Literature (Canada), an ALA Notable Book for Children, a BBYA Top Ten book, a YALSA Quick Pick for Reluctant Readers and a SLJ Best Book.

Plot Summary: Matt Cruse is a young cabin boy on the *Aurora*, a luxury passenger airship that travels high in the sky. The adventure begins with a daring air rescue. Matt jumps from the *Aurora* to a drifting air balloon to save the injured balloonist. As the old man weakens and eventually dies, he tells tales of beautiful magical creatures. Matt believes this to merely be the delirious ranting of a man who has lost control of his senses. He will discover that this is not so. When Matt meets the balloonist's granddaughter, Kate de Vries, a rich young girl who is now a passenger on the *Aurora*, they quickly develop a bond and work together to prove that the old man's words were the truth. Along the way, Matt, Kate and the other passengers and crew on the ship face many challenges, including pirate attacks and a brutal storm. They end up shipwrecked on an apparently unexplored island. Matt and Kate's adventures continue as the danger increases.

Booktalk: Matt loves the airship life; he starts to feel unsettled when he is on the ground for too long. He was born on an airship; his father died on one. He is now working as a cabin boy, but expects to soon become a junior sail maker and eventually captain of the ship.

Matt is on duty on the *Aurora*'s crow's nest: "I raised my spyglass again and, with the help of the moon, caught a glimpse. It was a hot air balloon, hanging there in the night sky. Its running lights weren't on, which was odd." After Matt has bravely rescued the balloonist, the dying man speaks to him: "Did you see them?" he asked me, his voice scratchy... 'Yes,' I

said. 'I saw them too.' 'Good' he said, and that seemed to calm him down some. 'Beautiful creatures,' he said, smiling. 'They were. Beautiful.'" Matt has lied to the man, but he does not yet know how this lie will become truth in the months to come.

This courageous balloon rescue triggers a chain of events that will help Matt and his new friend Kate de Vries, a charming and adventurous heiress, save the day. Matt takes risks at every turn and proves that his young age does not prevent him from being incredibly brave and poised.

Join an amazing cast of characters aboard the *Aurora* as they dine on the crazed Chef Vlad's venison cutlets, fight pirates, risk the loss of their ship, face shipwreck, witness flying felines and form new and lasting friendships.

Curriculum tie-ins:

History

PIRATES! The passengers and crew of the *Aurora* encounter some nasty pirates. When did pirates exist? Do they still exist today? Research the history of pirates and compare them to the pirate's characters in *Airborn*. Was Vikram Szpirglas modeled on any pirates you have read about?

Science

What keeps an airship afloat? In *Airborn*, the *Aurora* uses a mango-scented gas called Nitrium. Does this gas really exist? What properties would a gas need to keep an airship running? Do any gases from the periodic table contain these properties?

Airship websites:

<http://www.myairsteam.com/>

<http://www.airship-association.org/whatis.html>

<http://www.airships.net/>

<http://inventors.about.com/od/astartinventions/ss/airship.htm>

Art

The cloud cat is a creature that Mr. Oppel invented for *Airborn*. It is part bird and part cat.

Using descriptions given in the book draw a picture of a cloud cat.

Create a new beast choosing 2 new animals and sketch this creature as well.

If you loved this, you'll like:

Hughes, Carol. *Jack Black and the Ship of Thieves*. Random House, 2000.

Stevenson, Robert Louis. *Treasure Island*. Sterling Publishing, 2004.

(One of many editions available; original published in 1883).

Verne, Jules. *Around the World in Eighty Days*. HarperCollins Publishers, 1988.

(original published in 1873).

Verne, Jules. *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. 1st World Library, 2005.

(original published in 1870).

Wells, H.G. *The Time Machine*. Tor Books, 1992.

(original published in 1895).

Additional resources

Airborn Literature Unit for Grades 6-9. Available at:

<http://www.kennethoppel.ca/novel%20studies/Airborn%20Novel%20Study.pdf>

Airborn Study Guide. Available at:

<http://www.agsd.ca/studentservices/harknessl/airborn/index.htm>

Airborn is available in a wonderful unabridged CD from Full Cast Audio.

A movie version of *Airborn* will be released in 2008. It is being directed by Stephen Sommers and will star Liam Aiken (*A Series of Unfortunate Events*) as Matt Cruse.

Other books by this author:

Kenneth Oppel has published more than 20 picture and young adult books (as well as one adult mystery novel). Here is a selection of some of these great works:

Skybreaker (sequel to *Airborn*). Eos, 2005.

Silverwing series:

Silverwing. Aladdin Paperbacks, 1999.

Sunwing. Simon & Schuster, 2000.

Firewing. Simon & Schuster, 2003.

Darkwing. Eos, 2007. (September release).

Dead Water Zone, Joy St Books; 1st U.S. edition, May 1993.

The Live-forever Machine. HarperCollins Publishers Canada, 2002.

Websites

Airborn's website: <http://www.airborn.ca/>

Kenneth Oppel's website: <http://www.kennethoppel.ca/home.htm>

Interview with Kenneth Oppel:

http://www.bowjamesbow.ca/2006/11/26/in_conversation.shtml

WHEN THE EMPEROR WAS DIVINE

by Julie Otsuka

Genre: Historical Fiction

Themes: Identity, loyalty, alienation, guilt

Author information: Julie Otsuka grew up in California. After graduating from Yale University, she received her M.F.A. from Columbia. She now lives in New York City. *When the Emperor Was Divine* was inspired by her family's experiences. Her grandfather was arrested by the FBI right after Pearl Harbor and was moved from detention facility to detention facility as a "dangerous enemy alien" while her grandmother, mother, and uncle were interned for three and a half years at a camp in Utah. Because her grandfather died when Otsuka was young, she never heard of his experiences first-hand, and the rest of her family rarely spoke about their internment, except to refer to the "camp," which sounded innocuous and normal to her. One day she came across a box of letters her grandfather had written to his family during the war. After reading them, Otsuka began to study oral histories, old newspapers, and books about the Japanese American internment camps.

Plot summary: In spare, poetic language, Otsuka tells the story of a Japanese American family who are forced from their home after the United States enters World War II to live in an internment camp. The experience, from the reading of the posted notice of the impending relocation to the return home, is told in 5 different voices, giving the viewpoints of the mother, the daughter, the son, the two children together, and the father.

Booktalk: Imagine that the FBI shows up on your doorstep in the middle of the night and takes your father away -- still dressed in his pajamas -- with no explanation. Then your mother, on her way to the library, reads a notice in the post office window that prompts her to immediately return home and beginning packing. Soon the house is closed up, and you, your sibling, and your mother are on a train to an isolated detention facility in the desert. This scenario was played out in thousands of families as they complied with Executive Order 9066. This Order, which was signed by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in February 1942, authorized the transport of approximately 110,000 Japanese Americans from their West Coast homes to ten internment camps. This novel gives the perspectives of various family members as their lives are changed forever.

Curriculum tie-ins:

English/Creative Writing

Write about an experience you have had from your viewpoint. Then write about the same experience from the viewpoint of one or two members of your family (or from the viewpoint of friends) who experienced the same event.

History

This book is a perfect companion book to a study of World War II. Compare and contrast the attitude toward and treatment of Japanese Americans following Pearl Harbor to the attitude toward and treatment of Muslims and/or those of Mid-Eastern heritage following September 11th.

If you loved this, you'll like:

Guterson, David. *Snow Falling on Cedars*. Vintage. 1995.
Hegi, Ursula. *Stones From the River*. Simon and Schuster, 1994.
Houston, Jeanne Wakatsuki. *The Legend of Fire Horse Woman*. Kensington, 2003.
Salisbury, Graham. *Eyes of the Emperor*. Wendy Lamb Books, 2005
Uchida, Yoshiko. *Desert Exile: The Uprooting of a Japanese-American Family*.
University of Washington Press, 1982.

Additional resources

Books:

Cooper, Michael L. *Fighting for Honor: Japanese Americans and World War II*.
Clarion, 2000.
Cooper, Michael L. *Remembering Manzanar: Life in a Japanese Relocation
Camp*. Clarion, 2002.
Ishizuka, Karen L. *Lost & Found: Reclaiming Japanese American Incarceration*.
University of Illinois Press, 2006.
Levine, Ellen. *A Fence Away From Freedom: Japanese Americans and World War II*.
Putnam, 1995.
Only What We Could Carry: the Japanese American Internment Experience.
Edited with introduction by Lawson Fusao Inada. Heyday, 2000.
Oppenheim, Joanne. *Dear Miss Breed: True Stories of the Japanese American
Incarceration during World War II and a Librarian Who Made a Difference*.
Scholastic, 2006.
Yancey, Diane. *Life in a Japanese American Internment Camp*. Lucent, 1998.

Web sites: (Thanks to the St. Charles Public Library, St. Charles, Illinois which has a rich
website based on WHEN THE EMPEROR WAS DIVINE
http://www.stcharleslibrary.org/at_lib/programs/screads/sc07/links.htm)

Interviews with the author:

<http://www.asiasource.org/arts/julieotsuka.cfm>
http://www.bookbrowse.com/author_interviews/full/index.cfm?author_number=807
<http://www.randomhouse.com/boldtype/0902/otsuka/interview.html>

Ansel Adams's Photographs of Japanese-American Internment at Manzanar
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/anseladams/index.html>

Digital History: Asian American Voices: Part 3: World War II and Asian
Americans http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/asian_voices/asian_voices.cfm

Exploring the Japanese American Internment through Film and the Internet
<http://www.asianamericanmedia.org/jainternment/>

Topaz Camp: The camp featured in *When the Emperor Was Divine*
<http://www.millardcounty.com/topazcamp.html>

VIDEO: Come See the Paradise (1991) starring Denis Quaid and Tamlyn Tomita.

HOW I LIVE NOW

by Meg Rosoff

Genre: Realistic fiction

Themes: Family; war; eating disorders; cousins; the strength of love

Author information: Meg Rosoff was born and raised in the Boston, MA area. She worked in advertising before moving to England, where she now lives with her husband and daughter. *How I Live Now*, her first novel, won the 2005 Michael L. Printz Award. More biographical information may be found at www.bookbrowse.com/biographies/.

Plot summary: While Daisy is visiting her cousins in England, war breaks out and she is forced to face her problems in order to rescue herself and her youngest cousin from the unknown invaders.

Booktalk: As a last resort, Daisy, suffering from an eating disorder, is sent by her father and stepmother to her aunt and cousins in England. Their unconditional acceptance and her slow involvement in their bucolic lifestyle, help to break down some of the barriers Daisy has erected around herself. But it is her intense love for Edmond that finally allows her to look outside herself. When war breaks out and all the cousins are separated, it is his love and new found interest in others that allows Daisy to rescue both herself and one of her cousins. This is a tough look at the effects of war on society and the young as well as the redeeming value of love.

Curriculum tie-ins

English

Discuss the structure of this novel.

Discuss the effect of not knowing who the invaders were and why they invaded.

Discuss when this novel takes place as well as the passage of time in it.

Discuss the different kinds of love represented in this novel.

Discuss how symbolism is used in this novel and the use of capitals and lower case letters.

Write a new ending to this novel. Or, select a character and use him/her in a story.

History

Explore the history of war.

Look at the effects of war on noncombatants, especially children.

Look at the aftermaths of war and where they have led.

If you loved this, you'll like:

Doud, Siobhan. *A Swift Pure Cry*. Random House, 2007.
Green, John. *Looking for Alaska*. Penguin, 2006. (also on this year's GMBA list)
Staples, Suzanne Fisher. *Under the Persimmon Tree*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2005.
Watkins, Yoko Kawashima. *So Far From the Bamboo Grove*. HarperCollins, 1994.
Zusak, Markus. *The Book Thief*. Random House, 2006.

Additional resources:

Armstrong, Jennifer. *Shattered: Stories of Children and War*. Random House, 2002.

Other books by this author:

Just In Case. Random House, 2006.

FINDING LUBCHENKO

by Michael Simmons

Genre: Mystery

Themes: mystery and detective stories, adventure, espionage, fathers and sons, humor, ambivalence about home, friendship and families

Author information: Michael Simmons used to work in a publishing house writing teaching guides for popular young adult novels. He liked a lot of them, and thought that he could write one, too. The result was *Pool Boy*, his first novel. He lives in New York and Paris.

Plot summary: Sixteen-year-old Evan Macalister has a dilemma. When his tightfisted millionaire dad is accused of murdering a colleague in the high tech medical firm he owns, Evan has a dilemma. Should he turn over the laptop he stole from his Dad's company containing information to clear his Dad and face the consequences of the law and his father or find out the real story behind the murder on his own? Evan decides to investigate the crime himself. This decision leads Evan and his two friends, Ruben and Erika, to Paris, France for some wild adventures and humorous sleuthing in search of a person named Lubchenko—the key to clearing his father's name.

Booktalk: In Evan Macalister's mind, his wealthy entrepreneurial, frugal and overbearing father's decision to deny his son any of the benefits of privilege leaves Evan with no choice but to heist computers from his dad's company and sell them on eBay. The persuasive and risk taking Evan convinces his cautious friend Ruben, the technology whiz, to join him in this business venture and they set up shop in Ruben's garage. Business is going along as usual until Evan's dad is arrested for the murder of a colleague in the medical technology firm he owns. The information to absolve his dad is on the murdered man's laptop, recently stolen by Evan. Thus the dilemma ensues. Does Evan turn over the computer he stole containing evidence to set his father free, outing him as a thief? Does he keep quiet, leaving his dad in prison for a crime he did not commit? Or, does Evan take matters into his own hands, and use the evidence he has to solve the crime? Wanting to avoid being grounded for life, Evan chooses the latter and, along with his best friend Ruben and his love interest Erika, journeys to Paris, France in search of the real killer. How do three high school kids get themselves to Paris? On Dad's credit card of course. Their international adventure involves high suspense stakeouts and dangerous situations. Never one to miss an opportunity, Evan decides that this international journey cannot be all detective work and no fun, so while in Paris Evan and his friends experience the finest French cuisine, the most ritzy accommodations, and a sampling of the teenage nightlife. The threesome succeeds in solving the murder, releasing Evan's dad from prison. Evan's success at proving his dad's innocence doesn't seem to change his dad's approach to parenting and teaching the value of a dollar to his son, especially after the credit card bill arrives! But that less than perfect father-son relationship is what keeps this book real. In addition, the fast paced, funny adventure makes this a page-turner sure to keep readers captivated. The chapters are short and easy to read and Evan's quick thinking and smart-alecky ways make him an engaging and fun voice throughout the story.

Curriculum tie-ins:

Math

Money management and personal finance activities

Social Studies

Examine of socio-economic issues in society: sources of wealth/causes of poverty
Research Paris and France: the people, the culture, the geography, the food. Compare and contrast the experience and lifestyle of young adults in a large international city to young adults in a small, rural community.

Crime and terrorism

Research the incidence of Bioterrorism and white-collar crime in our country and around the world.

Decision-making and responsibility Students could examine the choice Evan makes throughout the story and evaluate the pros and cons of each to show how our choices impact self and others.

If you loved this you'll like:

Fredericks, Mariah. *Crunch Time*. Atheneum, 2005.
Grisham, John. *The Client*. Doubleday, 1993.
Patterson, James. *Maximum Ride: The Angel Experiment*. Little Brown, 2005.
Patterson, James. *Maximum Ride: School's Out Forever*. Little Brown, 2006.
Patterson, James. *Maximum Ride: Saving the World and Other Extreme Sports*. Little, Brown, 2007.
Plum-Ucci, Carol. *The Night My Sister Went Missing*. Harcourt Children's Books, 2006
Zusak, Marcus. *I am the Messenger*. Random House, 2005. (On this year's GMBA list)

Other books by this author:

Pool Boy. Roaring Brook Press, 2003.
The Rise of Lubchenko. Razorbill, 2006.
Vandal. Roaring Brook Press, 2006

Additional Resources:

<http://www.genrefluent.com/> Website reviewing many books in many genres and many are for young adults. There is a teen page link featuring reviews by teens.

<http://www.theedgars.com/nominees.html> This is a link to the Edgar Awards winning mystery writers of America. Select "Young Adult" and go to a list of award winning young adult mysteries.

RUNAWAYS VOL. 1: PRIDE & JOY

by Brian Vaughan and Adrian Alphona

Genre: teen superheroes, graphic novel

Themes: teen angst; family dynamics

Author information: Brian Vaughan was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1976. He has written stories for DC and Marvel characters, including Batman and X-Men, and has worked on screenplays, short stories and stage plays. In 2006 Vaughan was hired as an executive story editor for the popular television series, “Lost” where he wrote his first episode for the show entitled “Catch 22” with fellow writer Jeff Pinker.

Plot summary: One minute the only worry of a group of kids is how to maneuver through the trials of teenage life; the next minute they discover the twelve adults who are their parents are members of a secret society of super-powered villains. Now the six teens have to cope not only with learner’s permits, mediocre grades, acne, romance, and veganism, but with the added knowledge that their parents are evil and extremely dangerous now that their secret lives have been discovered. The unlikely allies must learn to deal with the emergence of their own mysterious powers as they run from the adults they have always trusted.

Booktalk: Isn’t being a teenager tough enough? - Getting lectured by your parents about excessive video game playing, poor grades, black nail polish, and smart aleck attitudes? This graphic novel follows six teens with nothing in common who are forced to hang out together while their parents have a business meeting. In need of amusement, they decide to spy on the adults. The teens gather behind a one way mirror expecting to have a good laugh at their boring parents and instead witness a group of super-powered villains commit a human sacrifice. The friends run away from home and parents and must struggle with their own newfound powers as they face the horrible facts of their family trees.

Curriculum tie-ins:

Health

Discuss family relationships (abuse, weight issues, puberty, generation gap)

Writing /Art

Create your own teen superhero story in conjunction with a workshop on designing your character in either the Japanese manga style or the American style.

If you loved this, you’ll like:

Bendis, Brian. *Ultimate Spider-Man. Vol. 1.* Marvel Comics, 2002.

Heinberg, Allan. *Young Avengers Vol. 2: Family Matters.* Marvel Comics, 2006.

Kyle, Craig. *New X-Men: Childhood’s End, Vol. 1.* Marvel Comics, May 2006.

Other books by this author: *Y: The Last Man, Ex Machina, Pride of Baghdad, Ultimate X-Men*

Websites of author: www.bkv.tv and www.myspace.com/briankvaughan

THE GLASS CASTLE: A Memoir

by Jeannette Walls

Genre: Memoir

Themes: Parenthood, strength of family ties, survival, personal achievement.

Author information: Jeanette Walls grew up in Arizona and West Virginia. She graduated from Barnard College and went on to become a columnist with *New York Magazine*, *U.S.A Today*, and *Esquire Magazine*. She is presently a regular contributor to *MSNBC online* and lives in New York with her husband, writer John Taylor.

Plot summary: In this moving story of her childhood, Jeannette Walls describes with humor and compassion what it was like growing up poor and hungry in a truly dysfunctional family.

Booktalk: To say that Jeannette Walls grew up a child of unconventional, eccentric parents does not begin to describe her life. Her mother, Rose Mary, was a free-spirited, frustrated artist, and her father, Rex, was a brilliant, charismatic alcoholic. While her mother was flighty and self-indulgent and told her children that “being homeless [was] an adventure,” her father would beguile them with his charm and the promise of one day building a glass castle in which they would all live. Both parents had a way of turning bad times into adventures, but neither of them was capable of assuming the responsibilities of parenthood or providing what the children desperately needed. In a household where the children were often left to care for themselves and one another, Jeannette learned to fend for herself. She cooked hot dogs at age three - and once ended up setting herself on fire. She later tried to fashion braces to correct her buckteeth and wore shoes held together with safety pins. As the family packed up and moved from place to place into one ramshackle home after another, Jeannette and her siblings were always the poorest among the poor.

Walls tells her story in a manner that is neither sad nor depressing. As she describes a childhood of poverty, hunger, and uncertainty, there is deep affection, acceptance, and loyalty in her tone when she speaks of her parents. And while she admits that her childhood was hard and that she would not want to relive it, she says she would not change a thing.

Curriculum tie-ins:

Sociology/Human Development

Would the Walls family be able to “get by” in today’s society? What forces would aid or hinder a family living this way today? (Include discussion of social welfare, mandatory reporting in schools, etc.)

Make a list of what might be described as “necessities” for a growing child. Is this list different today than it would have been when the author was growing up? Explain.

The author and her siblings grew up to be productive adults. Do you think the way they lived helped them in their adult life? If a child turns out to be a successful adult, does this justify the neglect experienced as a child? Explain.

English

Write a fictional memoir describing growing up in rural Vermont today. This memoir could include positive and negative experiences and should reflect many aspects of a child's life including school, friends, relations with extended family, and persons who may have influenced his/her life.

Reading

Reading Group Guide:

http://www.readinggroupguides.com/guides3/glass_castle1.asp

If you loved this book, you'll like:

Bragg, Rick. *All Over But the Shoutin'*. Vintage. 1998.

Karr, Mary. *The Liar's Club*. Penguin Books, 1995.

Awards and recognitions:

Winner of ALA Alex Award in 2006.

Starred review in *Booklist* and *Publishers Weekly*.

Other books by this author:

Dish: the Inside Story on the World of Gossip. William Morrow & Co., 2000.

Dish: How Gossip Became the News and the News Became Just Another Show.
Harper Paperbacks, 2001. (paperback edition of above title)

Additional Resources.

Unabridged audio version available from Recorded Books (www.recordedbooks.com)

Related Websites: (interviews with the author)

<http://www.pbs.org/now/news/305-transcript.html>

<http://www.gothamist.com>

<http://abcnews.go.com/Primetime/Entertainment/story?id=552776&page=1>

A CERTAIN SLANT OF LIGHT

by Laura Whitcomb

Genre: Fantasy

Theme: Ghosts, forgiveness, love, death, parenting, literature

Author information: Laura Whitcomb lives in Oregon and worked as a Language Arts teacher. Her literary work has won three Kay Snow Awards for writing, and she has sold the movie rights to *A Certain Slant of Light*, her first novel.

Plot summary: The ghost of a young woman clings to different literary hosts for over a century, until she finds a lost spirit like herself and falls in love.

Booktalk: “Someone was looking at me, a disturbing sensation when you’re dead.” So opens the story of Helen, a ghost who spends over a century invisible to the living—or the Quick, as she calls them—and encounters a young man who can see her. This strange experience makes her uneasy. But it is no ordinary 16 year old boy looking at her; James is Light—a ghost like herself—borrowing a soulless body. Finally, Helen has someone to talk to and who understands her, and she soon falls in love with the young man courting her. James encourages her to find a body to inhabit so that she can live in the material world with him. Alas, even with an entrance to the corporeal world, James and Helen face many challenges as underage teenagers at the mercy of very difficult families. As their situation unravels, it becomes clear that James and Helen must help each other unlock the secrets of their pasts so that their spirits can finally rest in peace.

Curriculum tie-ins

Language Arts/Social Studies

Helen chooses literary hosts to “cleave” to. Can you identify who these hosts might be? Based on the dates of these authors, how long has Helen been a spirit?

Both Helen and James are, in a sense, time travelers from a different era. They employ a different vocabulary, manner of speaking, and mores. Find examples of Helen’s and James’ behavior, thinking, and speech in the novel that are out of sync with contemporary society.

James was a soldier in the Civil War. Identify references in the novel and place them in historical context. How long has James been a ghost?

If you loved this, you'll like:

Griffin, Adele. *Where I Want to Be*. Putnam, 2005.

Niffenegger, Audrey. *The Time Traveler's Wife*. MacAdam/Cage, 2003.

Wallace, Rich. *Restless: A Ghost's Story*. Viking, 2003.

Zevin, Gabrielle. *Elsewhere. Fighting Ruben Wolfe*. Push, 2002

Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.

Another book by the author: *Your First Novel* with Ann Rittenberg

Author's website: <http://www.laurawhitcomb.com/>

AMERICAN BORN CHINESE by Gene Luen Yang

Genre: Graphic novel

Themes: the immigrant experience; racism; Chinese folklore; transformations; self-acceptance

Author information: Gene Yang has been writing and drawing comic books since he was in fifth grade. He grew up in California and now lives in the San Francisco Bay area, where he teaches high school computer science. He received both a National Book Award Honor and the American Library Association's Printz Award for the best teen book of the year for *American Born Chinese*.

Plot summary: A graphic novel containing three interconnected stories, two from contemporary America and one from Chinese folklore, all on the theme of accepting oneself and one's culture.

Booktalk: Monkey King seems like he's got it all: he's the ruler of his mountain kingdom and he has every magical superpower you can imagine. The hero of Chinese folk legend, and also of the graphic novel *American Born Chinese*, Monkey King has enormous strength: he can transform his size and shape; he can fly through the air; he can survive all kinds of wounds; he can defeat his enemies in a thousand ways. What he can't do is hang out with the cool Chinese gods at their parties. They won't let him in because he's a monkey, so he transforms himself as much as possible, until he gets trapped under a mountain of rock for five hundred years. The only way to get free is to accept his monkey self and transform back, but is the powerful Monkey King strong enough to do this hardest thing of all? [Pause] Elsewhere, as they say in the comics, Danny is enduring yet another humiliating visit from his cousin Chin-Kee. Chin-Kee seems to come from China every year just to embarrass Danny in front of his high school classmates, but is he really who he says he is? [Pause] Still elsewhere, Jin Wang is struggling at his high school. He's American Born Chinese, that is born in America to Chinese parents, and he gets racially insulted all the time at his mostly-white school. He feels so unhappy about his Asian heritage that he rejects his best friend who's FOB, or Fresh off the Boat, from Taiwan. But will this really get Jin Wang what he wants? And what are these three different stories doing in the same book -- or are they really different stories after all? For the answers and much more, including laughs, romance, and multiple episodes of extreme fantasy kung fu, try Gene Yang's comic book masterpiece, *American Born Chinese*.

Curriculum tie-ins:

Language Arts folk tales; tales of transformation

Social studies: the immigrant experience; Chinese folklore; racism and stereotyping

If you loved this, you'll like:

Kherdian, David, Reteller. *Monkey: A Journey to the West, the Classic Chinese Tale of Pilgrimage and Adventure*. Shambhala, 2000.

Nam, Vickie. *YELL-Oh Girls! Emerging Voices Explore Culture, Identity, and Growing Up Asian American*. Harper, 2001.

Wong, Joyce Lee. *Seeing Emily*. Abrams, 2005.

Other books by this author:

Gordon Yamamoto and the King of the Geeks, Slave Labor Graphics, 2004.
Loyola Chin and the San Peligran Order, Slave Labor Graphics, 2004.

Additional Resources:

<http://www.humblecomics.com/monkey/> (Gene Yang's take on the Monkey King stories)

"American Born Chinese" (an interview with Gene Yang), *School Library Journal*, Sept. 2006, Vol. 52 Issue 9, p. 41. ; also available online at
<http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/CA6367084.html>

Website of Author:

www.humblecomics.com

I AM THE MESSENGER

by Markus Zusak

Genre: fiction

Themes: family dynamics, self esteem

Author information: Markus Zusak was born in Sydney, Australia in 1975. He lives in Sydney, where he writes, teaches high school English and plays soccer.

Plot summary: Ed Kennedy spends his time driving a cab, hanging out with his friends, and sharing living space with his old odiferous dog. After capturing a bank robber, Ed begins receiving mysterious messages that direct him to addresses where people need help. He begins to get over his lifelong feeling of worthlessness as he is confronted with situations that require him to creative problem solving skills with a variety of people.

Booktalk: Markus Zusak, the author of *I Am the Messenger*, likes to say, “It’s the little stories that define us, our existence.” Meet Ed Kennedy, a nineteen-year-old cab driver, surrounded by lethargic friends, a large stinky dog, and a mother who likes to say to her son, “Believe it or not – it takes a lot of love to hate you like this.” Ed seems destined to wearily live the same old story until the day he captures a bank robber. His life takes a startling series of turns as playing cards begin arriving in his mailbox with cryptic messages that lead to Ed’s involvement in a labyrinth of strangers and circumstances. Who is sending the cards? Why does one of the messages say, “Good luck and keep delivering. I’m quite sure you realize your life depends on it.” These ominous words follow Ed as he maneuvers his way through his connections to a barefoot runner, a rapist, and a friend whose tattoo of Jimi Hendrix looks more like Richard Pryor.

Curriculum tie-ins:

Writing – Write about a “little story” that has helped define your life. (Quote: “It’s the little stories that define us, our existence.”)

If you loved this, you’ll like:

Green, John. *Looking for Alaska*. Puffin, 2006. (on this year’s GMBA list)
Johnson, Maureen. *13 Little Blue Envelopes*. HarperTeen, 2006.

Other books by this author:

The Book Thief. Random, 2006
Getting the Girl. Push, 2004.
Fighting Ruben Wolfe. Push, 2002

Website of author: www.randomhouse.com/features/markuszusak/

Green Mountain Book Award

Checklist, 2007-2008

Check the boxes as you read the books. You **MUST** read at least three titles on this list to vote.

<input type="checkbox"/> Akbar, Said Hyder	Come Back to Afghanistan
<input type="checkbox"/> Almond, Steve	Candyfreak
<input type="checkbox"/> Dessen, Sarah	The Truth about Forever
<input type="checkbox"/> Foer, Jonathan Safran	Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close
<input type="checkbox"/> Gaiman, Neil	Anansi Boys
<input type="checkbox"/> Green, John	Looking for Alaska
<input type="checkbox"/> Oppel, Kenneth	Airborn
<input type="checkbox"/> Otsuka, Julie	When the Emperor Was Divine
<input type="checkbox"/> Rosoff, Meg	How I Live Now
<input type="checkbox"/> Simmons, Michael	Finding Lubchenko
<input type="checkbox"/> Vaughan, Brian	Runaways, Vol1: Pride & Joy
<input type="checkbox"/> Walls, Jeannette	The Glass Castle
<input type="checkbox"/> Whitcomb, Laura	A Certain Slant of Light
<input type="checkbox"/> Yang, Gene Luen	American Born Chinese
<input type="checkbox"/> Zusak, Marcus	I am the Messenger